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ABSTRACT

Arranging work time in new and flexible ways has been a topic of growing interest for the past ten years. This handbook for employers explains one way in which jobs can be made more flexible--job sharing. It discusses ways that work hours can be shared with potential benefits for employer and employees. Topics discussed include definition of job sharing, kinds of jobs that can be shared, benefits to the organization, employer concerns, union attitudes, how job sharing works, potential problems, ways to make job sharing successful, and reactions from supervisors of job sharers. A chart of possible job sharing arrangements is also included. (KC)

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JOB SHARING
GENERAL INFORMATION

Prepared by:

Barney Olmsted
and the New Ways to Work
Job Sharing Project

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NEW WAYS TO WORK (NWW) is a non-profit, work resource organization. Founded in 1972, it opened because of a belief that many people's work needs were not being met in our changing society. The focus of the Job Sharing Project is the creation of more work time options for both individuals and organizations.

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WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

During the last ten years, interest has been developing in new ways to arrange work time. Flexible working hours, the compressed work week, job sharing, permanent part-time employment and sabbatical leaves are among the new work patterns which reflect a growing inclination to experiment with non-standard work time.

Among the many reasons for this interest are:

- Changes in the nature of the workforce, as women and minorities participate in growing numbers and older workers are less inclined to remain in the workforce full time.
- A recognition that current economic growth is either insufficient to provide jobs for all who want and need them or is taking place in job categories which are difficult to fill.
- A desire on many people's part for a way to 'individualize' work time. That is, arrange work schedules in a way that recognizes the interrelationship between work and the rest of life—family, education, community activities.

GROWING INTEREST IN PART-TIME WORK

One trend that has been attracting management interest recently is the increased demand for voluntary, part-time employment. 22 percent of the workers in the United States now work part-time. In the past twenty-five years, this segment has grown at twice the rate of the full-time labor force.

A change in the nature of the part-time worker has

accompanied their growth in numbers. Increasingly, professionals and technical people are interested in working part-time at some point in their career. An interest in trading work-time for leisure, the growth of dual career families and the increase of career-oriented women have all contributed to this change.

Opportunities for professional, part-time work remain scarce, however, and one of the newest alternative work arrangements—job sharing—is an effort to create part-time options in professional, technical and supervisory jobs that used to be available only on a full-time basis.

WHAT IS JOB SHARING?

Job sharing is: two people sharing the responsibilities of one full-time job with salary and benefits prorated.

Job sharing is permanent part-time employment; it is two people working in what used to be a one-person, full-time job; it is two people collaborating in order to restructure a job that can be neither reduced in hours nor divided.

Because it is a form of permanent part-time employment, job sharing implies a career orientation, a labor force attachment and a potential for upward mobility that historically has not been associated with part-time work. Increasingly, it also implies the same fringe benefits and job protections as full-time positions.

HOW MUCH SHARING IS THERE IN A SHARED JOB?

The amount of sharing or collaboration between partners depends in large part on the nature of the job. Some jobs can be divided between sharers with little or no interaction necessary. This is sometimes called *job splitting* and usually occurs in job categories such as receptionist, typist or teller.

Positions can also be divided in terms of two substantially

different levels of task and responsibility. These *split level* jobs may or may not require interaction and collaboration.

Jobs that have been restructured by hiring two people instead of one range from positions which require little or no collaboration between partners to situations where sharers function as a highly integrated team.

WHAT KINDS OF JOBS CAN BE SHARED?

The types of jobs that have been shared include: Administrative assistant, teacher, facilities engineer, market researcher, receptionist, personnel administrator, trainer, project director, comptroller, teller, career counselor and organizational development specialist.

A number of these jobs have been supervisory positions. Although supervisors generally are not allowed to work part time, on the assumption that they must be there at all times, there have been some positive results when they have worked reduced hours. Often their absence increases their employee's development.

In general, the types of positions most likely to benefit from job sharing are defined by one or more of these characteristics:

- Requires a broad range of skills.
- Periods of intense peak activity alternating with slack periods.
- Requires a great deal of creativity.
- Tedious or monotonous.
- Results in employee burn-out from too much pressure.
- Needs more than eight hour coverage.

To date, the wide variety of positions which have been shared by two employees indicate that the nature or the requirements of the job are not as critical to the success of job-sharing as the abilities of the two employees and the support of the supervisor.

HOW DOES AN ORGANIZATION BENEFIT?

Greater flexibility in work scheduling. Many positions have periods of peak activity followed by 'dead' spells. Job sharing can provide a more efficient means of utilizing employees' time. The use of teams can enable employers either to redesign schedules so that both sharers work during times of greatest demand or to extend hours of service by arranging a gap period.

Retaining valued employees. Family responsibilities, the need to complete or continue education, the desire for more free time—all of these have caused employers to lose valued staff, particularly when they were in job categories that could not be split or reduced to part-time. Hiring and training are expensive. Reducing turnover by allowing employees to share their jobs is becoming an attractive option. 'Burnout' on the job can also be minimized or eliminated if reducing hours is an alternative.

Wider range of skills in a single job title. In many fields, work is becoming increasingly complex and an individual in one position is often expected to demonstrate competence in a range of areas. Two people sharing a position not only bring diverse talents to a job but also reinforce each other with complementary areas of expertise.

Recruitment from a broader labor pool. Although unemployment is a serious issue in this country, there are still geographic areas and particular job categories which suffer from a labor shortage. The opportunity to work part time is often attractive to people with desired skills who want or need to work less than full time. (Recently the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that one in every five persons seeking employment was looking for part-time work.)

New options for older employees. With mandatory retirement now at age 70 and inflation and unemployment discouraging older workers from participating in early retirement programs, some employers are beginning to experiment with ways to allow employees to phase their retirement. Reducing hours and allowing older employees to work part-time or share their jobs is one way to do this.

More energy on the job. Job sharers are often credited with greater productivity. Supervisors of sharers have generally noted both an increase in quantity and quality of work. More energy and less fatigue are cited as reasons.

Reductions in absenteeism and use of sick leave. Part-time work affords more personal time. In pilot projects and surveys of employers who have considerable percentage of part-time workers, a reduction of absenteeism as well as less sick leave has consistently been noted.

Continuity of job performance. When one member of a job sharing team leaves or is absent because of an accident or extended illness, the remaining sharer can cover full-time until the partner returns or is replaced. (Note: It is important that this sort of time trade-off be agreed upon at the time of the initiation of the work assignment.)

WHAT ARE EMPLOYER CONCERNS ABOUT JOB SHARING?

Cost Factors

A primary concern of employers is that job sharing be cost effective. The cost of **employee benefits** is an area that is extremely sensitive. It is important to construct benefit packages that are equitable to both employer and job sharers.

Employee benefits are commonly grouped into three categories:

- **Statutory benefits.** These are mandated by law and include Social Security Insurance, Unemployment Insurance and Worker's Compensation Insurance.
- **Compensatory benefits.** These are wages paid for time not worked. They include sick leave, vacation, holidays and other contracted days off.
- **Supplementary benefits.** This category of benefits supplements income in various ways and includes insurance (life, medical, dental), pension plans, profit sharing, stock purchase, etc.

Prorating benefits whenever possible is encouraged by many advocates of job sharing. They recognize that job sharers should receive benefits but the cost should relate to what an employer pays for a full-timer who would hold the position.

Any benefit computed as a percent of salary is automatically prorated. Compensatory benefits are also easy to prorate. It is health benefits that concern employers most. In order to prorate the cost but offer employees full coverage, some employers pay half the amount for each job sharer that they would for a full-timer. The employees can then pay the remaining half or not as their need demands.

A few employers have begun to offer 'cafeteria style' benefits which also allows them to prorate the cost for part-timers.

Other cost factors to consider are:

Overtime. A number of employers have found that the increased scheduling flexibility possible with job sharers and other part-timers can reduce the need for overtime. This has been accomplished by scheduling sharers to work together during peak periods of demand or by arranging a gap period during 'dead' times and extending service hours as needed.

As noted, **sick leave** and **absenteeism** is generally greatly reduced and when full-time employees who might have left if part-time options were not available are retained, job sharing actually reduces **turnover.**

Some employers have reported an increase in **training** costs. The significance of these costs vary considerably depending on the amount and duration of the training and on whether one partner can train the other.

Increased **productivity** was reported by three employers out of five in a recent American Management Association survey of employers of part-timers and job sharers and by 90.1% of supervisors queried in a State of California Department of Motor Vehicles survey.

Union attitudes

Unions have traditionally viewed part-time work with considerable reserve if not hostility. This attitude is beginning to change, however, as more union members press for reduced work hour options. A number of unions have begun

to negotiate the right to share jobs as long as the part-timers have parity with full-time employees. Several criteria have been stipulated to ensure this. They are: (1) that part-time work is voluntary; (2) base salary scale and fringe benefits are maintained; (3) protections against speed-up are instituted and premium overtime paid if part-timers are asked to work more hours than they have contracted for; and (4) layoffs must occur according to some kind of seniority process rather than part-timers automatically being laid off first.

Reversibility

What happens if a job sharer wants to work full-time? Policies on reversibility should be clearly thought out and stated before an organization institutes job sharing.

Accountability and Responsibility

Because job sharing is a new work arrangement, employers are sometimes concerned that no one will be directly responsible for getting the work done if two people are hired instead of one. In practice, this has not been a problem. Job sharers and other permanent part-timers are often particularly responsible because their morale and commitment to the organization have been enhanced by the opportunity to work hours that are better suited to their individual needs.

HOW DOES A SHARED JOB WORK?

When two people share one full-time job **time, task** and **salary** must be apportioned between them. There are many different ways that this can be done.

When establishing a **work schedule**, the needs of the job are the primary criteria. Keeping that caveat in mind, however, there are a variety of possible ways to schedule time. Some sharers have worked on alternate days; some rotate their schedule to conform to the work flow or work M-T-W one week and Th-F the next; others overlap every day or once a week to cover peak periods of activity or ensure sufficient communication. The chart below illustrates some of the schedules sharers have arranged.

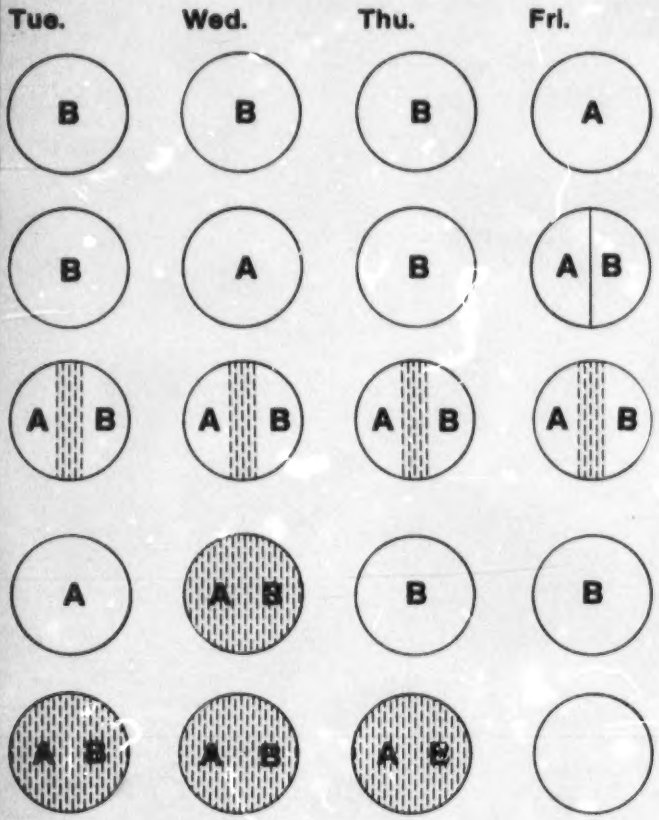
Examples of job

Position	Daily Mon.
Bank Teller Total hours worked: A=16 B=24	
Sales support representative Total hours worked: A=20 B=20 (A and B work four hours each on Friday)	
Facilities engineer Total hours worked: A=20 B=20 (A and B share seven-hour day overlapping by one hour)	
Teacher Total hours worked: A=24 B=24 (A and B both work eight hours on Wednesday)	
Workshop coordinator Total hours worked: A=20 B=20 (A and B work together for four five-hour days with Friday off)	

Note: Shading indicates time when both A and B are working. Although not illustrated here, there are also instances where the working day is extended by incorporating a period during which neither sharer works.

harers' work schedules

chedule



Time frames of every other month and six months on, six months off are also popular in some professions.

Dividing the work entails identifying the responsibilities of the job and relating them to the particular skills and experience of each sharer. Tasks are then allocated on the basis of the best use of each sharer's talents and energy. In doing this, care should be taken to ensure that work is equalized in difficulty, complexity and responsibility between the partners. Wherever possible tasks should be divided so that the balance of initiative does not tip one way or the other.

Salary and benefits are generally prorated on the basis of time worked and each sharer's skill and experience. This often means that sharers are paid different wages.

WHAT POTENTIAL PROBLEMS EXIST?

- If not agreed upon in advance, sharers may not plan to cover for each other. Expectations should be clearly understood on each side.
- If communication is not good, things fall through the cracks. Designing an effective communication system is a must for sharers.
- Poor coordination of activities leads to a lack of continuity and wasted time. Good organization is also a must.
- Space and equipment use can double if work schedule is not carefully thought out.
- More supervisory time is necessary when a team is not functioning well.

For a job to be successfully shared, it must:

- Be voluntary
- Be on a parity with full-time positions (benefits, salary, job rights)
- Have the support of supervisor
- Have clearly understood expectations on both sides
- Be well organized, have good communication skills and be cooperative

WHAT DO SUPERVISORS OF JOB SHARERS SAY?

"Consistent high level of activity; more time for for creative thought."

"Works superbly! I get much more done and have greater flexibility. I get better personnel that do more than when the position was filled with one full-time person."

"Good for staff morale to know there are options."

"The combination increases productivity and results in more innovative solutions. Neither gets 'burned out' or bored or lackadaisical. Each always comes to work eager, fresh and enthusiastic."

"The production level and morale of personnel sharing jobs are very high."

"As each person is doing the same work they are able to share experiences and be supportive of each other. We have found this to be a very productive job structure."

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Job Sharing Publications

Job Sharing in the Public Sector. October 1979. 79pp. *Mail order: $4.50*

Job Sharing: A New Pattern for Quality of Work and Life. Published by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, Kalamazoo, Mi. 1979. 187pp. *Mail order: $5.50*

Articles and Reports on Job Sharing. *Mail order: $3.75*
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For additional information:
New Ways to Work
149 Ninth Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 552-1000